

MASTERING

HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS

2023

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Introduction

Processing incoming high school, transfer credit, international, and military transcripts is crucial for Higher Education institutions when evaluating a student's academic qualifications and potential.

High school transcripts are of special importance for first-year students, as they provide a comprehensive record of the student's academic achievements throughout their high school career, including a list of courses taken, grades received, GPA, class rank, and more, which help institutions ensure that admitted students meet the necessary prerequisites for their chosen programs. This is particularly important in STEM fields, where students need a strong foundation in specific subjects to succeed.

A unique set of opportunities and challenges arise when considering high school transcripts. They've become even more important with the rise of test-optional policies in higher education — in the absence of standardized test scores, transcripts provide a more comprehensive picture of a student's academic achievements and potential. Admissions officers can use these transcripts to assess a student's performance in individual courses, evaluate their academic rigor, and identify any areas of strength or weakness.

But gathering information that is missing or inconsistent, handling varying grading systems and scales, and sorting out differences in curriculum and course offerings between high schools can be a burden on admissions staff, especially during periods of high enrollment.

In this guide, we'll:

- Investigate high school transcripts and best practices
- Explore and discuss common challenges
- Review important factors to consider
- Discuss strategies for handling transcript process challenges
- Provide tips on streamlining your processing of high school transcripts

After reading, you'll be armed with the information you need to review and consider how you can master incoming high school transcripts for a more streamlined and effective admissions process. Ready to dive in?



UNDERSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS

Processing high school transcripts can be a complex and time-consuming task for higher education institutions, especially during times of increased enrollment and changing strategies, such as the adoption of test-optional admissions policies. Yet they contain so much key data which, when harnessed properly, can empower an admissions team to make smarter decisions more quickly. Intelligent automation solutions, such as Shamrock's Freedom transcript processing software, can help streamline the process and save time by extracting key data from the transcript automatically, improving accuracy and efficiency.

In order to best frame some best practices and common challenges when considering high school (and other) transcripts, we'll briefly set the stage and outline a few areas generally included in a high school transcript that contain valuable data for your organization:

- 1. Personal Information:** Student's name, address, phone number, and date of birth.
- 2. Academic Information:** Information on the courses taken by the student, grades received, and the cumulative GPA. It also includes information on the student's class rank, if applicable.
- 3. Standardized Test Scores:** Scores on standardized tests such as the SAT, ACT, or AP exams.
- 4. Extracurricular Activities:** Information on the student's involvement in clubs, sports, community service, and other extracurricular activities.
- 5. Honors and Awards:** Any academic or other awards received by the student.
- 6. Graduation Information:** Date of graduation and any special honors received, such as graduating with honors or as a member of the National Honor Society.



Navigating the Alphabet Soup of Grading Systems

When evaluating transcripts, it is important to understand the grading system used by the student's high school and how it compares to the grading systems used by your institution.

High schools typically use a numerical grading system that ranges from 0 to 100. Letter grades, such as A, B, C, D, and F, are assigned based on the numerical score, with A being the highest and F being the lowest. Advanced Placement (AP) courses are typically weighted, meaning that the numerical score is multiplied by a factor of 1.0-1.2, depending on the school, to account for the more rigorous coursework. Some high schools also offer International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, which use a grading system that ranges from 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest. IB courses may also be weighted, depending on the school. That's a lot to consider. But wait, there's more!



Colleges and universities use a variety of grading systems, ranging from letter grades (A, B, C, D, F) to numerical scales (0-4.0 or 0-100) to pass/fail designations. The grading system used can affect admissions decisions because it provides a standard measure of a student's academic performance.

Admissions officers consider the rigor of the courses taken and the grades earned when evaluating an applicant's academic qualifications. They also take into account any trends in grades or improvement over time. In addition, some institutions have policies regarding the minimum grades required for admission, or for specific programs within the institution.



Transcript Evaluation

The transcript evaluation process for admissions officers involves assessing several factors to determine whether a student is a good fit for the program, including academic performance, course content and rigor, grade point average (GPA), test scores, and extracurricular activities such as community involvement and work experience. Additionally, for transfer students, credits from other institutions will need to be evaluated to determine how they transfer to the new institution.

Some important factors considered in transcript evaluation for high school transcripts, in particular, include:

Grades: Evaluating grades earned in different courses is an important factor. Evaluators look at the overall GPA, as well as the grades earned in individual courses.

Course rigor: The level of difficulty of courses is also considered, including whether students took honors, AP, or IB courses, and how they performed in those courses.

Course content: Evaluators look at the content of courses taken, including the subject matter and the depth of knowledge acquired in those courses.

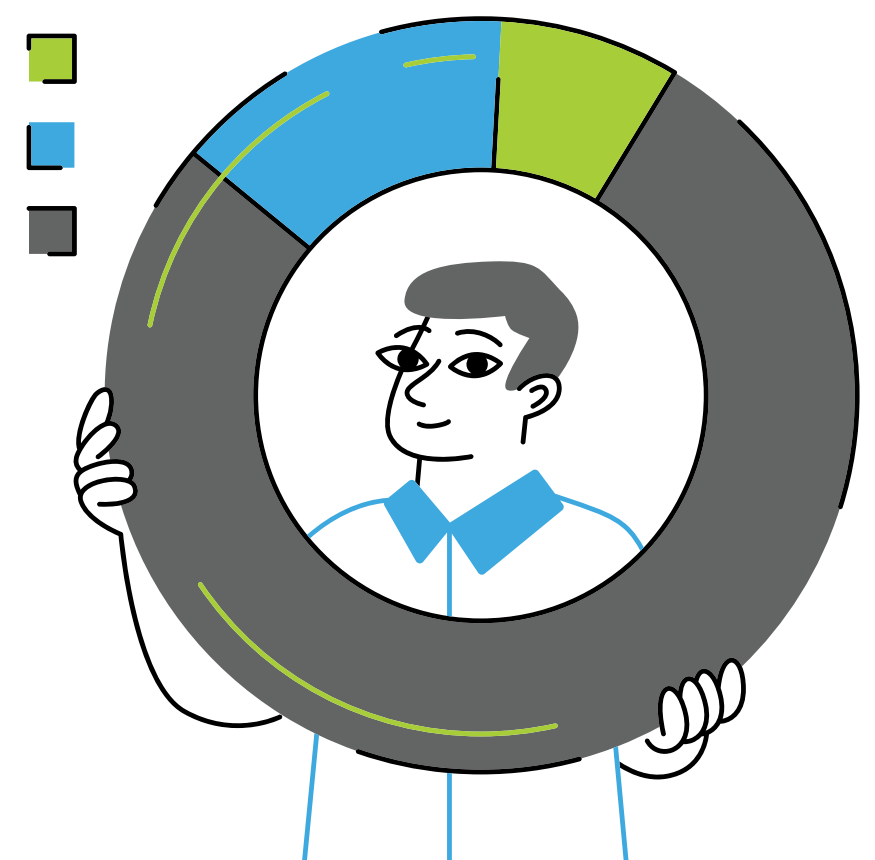
Graduation requirements: High schools have specific graduation requirements, which can vary by state or district. Evaluators need to ensure that students have fulfilled these requirements.

Transcript authenticity: It's important to verify the authenticity of transcripts to ensure that they have not been altered or falsified in any way.

Course descriptions: Evaluators may review course descriptions to better understand the content and rigor of courses taken by the student.

Credit transferability: Evaluators determine which credits are transferable to the new institution, based on the institution's credit transfer policies and course equivalency standards.

Ultimately, the goal is to select a diverse, talented, and motivated student body that will contribute to the academic community, promote institutional values, and enhance the educational experience for all students.



Common Transcript Types in Higher Education

High School Transcripts:

High school transcripts typically list courses taken, grades earned, and credits earned. Look for a student's overall GPA as well as individual course grades. Check if the high school provides information on the rigor of the courses taken, such as advanced placement or honors courses.

International Baccalaureate (IB) Transcripts:

IB transcripts show the student's score on each IB exam they took, as well as their overall IB Diploma score. It's important to understand the scoring system used by the IB program, as it is different from traditional grading systems. The maximum score for the IB Diploma is 45, and scores of 24 or higher are considered passing.

Advanced Placement (AP) Transcripts:

AP transcripts show the scores the student received on each AP exam taken. Scores range from 1 to 5, with a score of 3 considered passing. Look for the number of AP courses the student has taken, as well as their overall AP exam score average.

Transfer Credit Transcripts:

Transfer credit transcripts are official documents that show the courses and credits earned by a student at another institution, which are being transferred to another current college or university. Transfer credit transcripts may also be used to demonstrate that a student has met specific requirements or prerequisites for a program or degree.

An articulation or course equivalency database may also assist admissions staff in identifying related for-credit coursework and course equivalency for transfer students, but multiply this by hundreds or thousands of transcripts, and the monster hiding under the paperwork quickly begins to rear its ugly head.



It can take upwards of **15 minutes** to manually process a single transcript.



Guaranteeing A Fair and Square Process

- 1. Establish clear admission criteria:** Before evaluating transcripts, it's important to establish clear admission criteria. Admissions officers should consider factors such as academic performance, extracurricular activities, essays, and letters of recommendation.
- 2. Standardize the evaluation process:** To ensure consistency, it's important to standardize the evaluation process. Admissions officers should use a consistent rubric for evaluating transcripts, and take into account factors such as the grading scale used by the school and the rigor of the coursework.
- 3. Consider the context of the applicant's academic record:** Admissions officers should take into account the context of the applicant's academic record, such as the quality of the high school and the opportunities available to the student. This can help ensure that students are evaluated fairly and not disadvantaged based on their background.
- 4. Train admissions officers:** It's important to train admissions officers on how to evaluate transcripts consistently and fairly. This can include training on the admissions criteria, the evaluation process, and any specific factors that may be relevant to the institution.
- 5. Monitor and adjust the evaluation process:** Admissions officers should regularly monitor and adjust the evaluation process as needed. This can help ensure that the process remains fair and effective, and that any issues or concerns are addressed promptly.



TRANSCRIPT PROCESSING

BEST PRACTICES

Transcript processing can be complex and time-consuming, but following a few tips and strategies can help you establish efficient processes and procedures to manage the task effectively.

Developing clear and consistent policies, automating processes, training staff on best practices, implementing quality control measures, and communicating clearly with students are all critical factors in streamlining transcript processing. Additionally, processing transfer credit and international and military transcripts can be even more challenging.

From Receiving to Recording: The Transcript Processing Workflow

The typical transcript processing workflow for higher education institutions can vary depending on the institution's specific policies and procedures. Let's briefly review a typical transcript workflow common for many Higher Ed institutions:

- 1. Receiving the Transcript:** The institution receives the transcript from the student or the issuing institution.
- 2. Transcript Evaluation:** The transcript is evaluated to determine the courses completed, grades earned, and credits earned.
- 3. Course Equivalency:** Course equivalency is determined to ensure that the courses taken at the previous institution meet the requirements of the new institution.
- 4. Transfer Credit:** Transfer credits are awarded for courses that meet the institution's requirements.
- 5. GPA Calculation:** The GPA is calculated based on the grades earned at the previous institution and the institution's grading system.
- 6. Transcript Entry:** The transcript information is entered into the institution's SIS or ECM system.



7. Record Keeping: The institution keeps a record of the transcript for the student's academic file.

8. Notification to the Student: The student is notified of the transfer credit awarded and the courses that have been accepted towards the degree program.

Processing transfer credit and international and military transcripts can be more complex due to differences in grading systems and course equivalencies and may require additional research and evaluation to determine equivalent courses and credit transferability. Institutions may also need to work with outside agencies to verify the authenticity of international transcripts.

Understanding transfer credit policies, reviewing course descriptions and syllabi, working with credential evaluation services, staying up-to-date with international education systems, and using intelligent automation software, like Shamrock's Freedom, can all help simplify your transcript process.



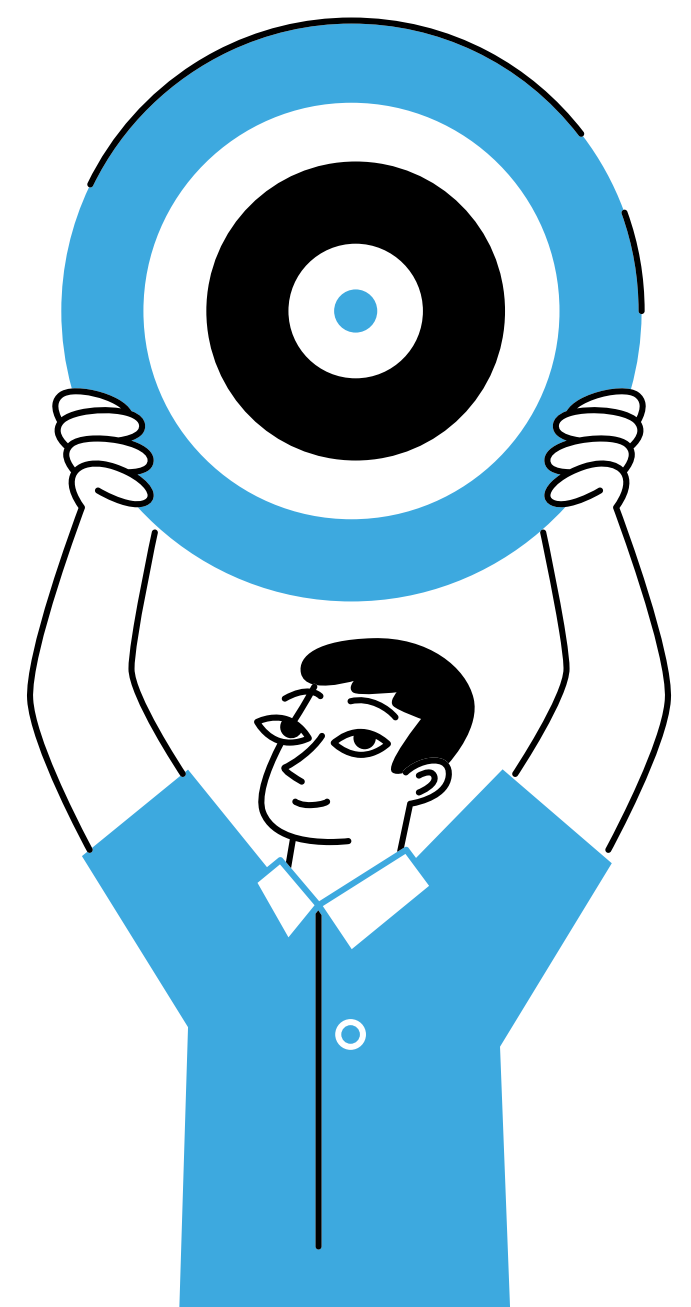
If you have any **questions** or **concerns** about interpreting transcripts, it's always a good idea to reach out to the student or their high school or college for clarification too!



Tips, Strategies, and Automation Tools for Efficiency and Accuracy

With the below tips in mind, you'll be better equipped to master high school transcript processing and streamline the overall evaluation and admissions process.

- 1. Develop clear and consistent policies:** Establishing clear and consistent policies for evaluating and processing transcripts is essential to ensure consistency in the evaluation process. This includes defining credit transfer policies, equivalency tables, and articulation agreements.
- 2. Automate processes where possible:** Automating processes, such as transcript evaluation and transfer credit processing, can significantly reduce the workload and potential for errors. Consider using software solutions, such as Freedom, to automate these processes.
- 3. Communicate clearly with students:** Communicating clearly with students about transcript requirements, deadlines, and evaluation processes can help reduce confusion and ensure timely processing of transcripts.
- 4. Train staff on best practices:** It is important to ensure that staff responsible for processing transcripts are trained on best practices for evaluation and processing. This includes understanding the different types of transcripts and the processes and procedures for evaluating them.
- 5. Implement quality control measures:** Instituting quality control measures, such as regular audits and peer reviews, can help ensure accuracy and consistency in the evaluation process.



6. Review course descriptions and syllabi: For transfer credits, ensure course descriptions and syllabi are carefully reviewed to ensure they align with the institution's academic standards and requirements.

7. Work with credential evaluation services: International transcripts often require evaluation by a third-party credential evaluation service to ensure they meet the institution's academic standards. Similarly, military transcripts may require evaluation by the American Council on Education (ACE) or other similar organizations. Work with these services to ensure accurate evaluation and processing.

8. Stay up-to-date with international education systems: International education systems vary widely, and it is essential to stay informed about the grading systems, credit systems, and academic credentials used in different countries.



Bonus tip: **SYSTEMology** is a business process management approach designed to create efficient, effective, and scalable processes in any organization. By breaking down and simplifying processes, SYSTEMology can improve productivity, reduce errors, and ultimately lead to better business outcomes. If you're looking to streamline your organization's processes and improve operational efficiency, consider exploring SYSTEMology. And if you need help implementing the approach, know that Shamrock Solutions are certified SYSTEMology specialists and can help guide you through the System. We're process experts!



5 Tips for Handling Lots of Transcripts

If your institution receives lots of transcripts during periods of high enrollment, you're well familiar with the challenge it can present your team and admissions department. We've compiled a few tips and strategies for managing and organizing large volumes of transcripts:

- 1. Utilize technology:** Consider using an intelligent automation solution like Freedom to streamline the transcript processing workflow, reduce manual data entry, and improve accuracy. This can help you manage large volumes of transcripts efficiently and effectively.
- 2. Develop a clear organizational system:** Establish a consistent and intuitive filing system for transcripts that allows for easy retrieval and tracking. This can include organizing transcripts by student name, school name, and date received.
- 3. Create a timeline:** Establish a clear timeline for processing transcripts, and make sure all staff members are aware of deadlines and turnaround times. This can help ensure that transcripts are processed efficiently and that applicants receive decisions in a timely manner.
- 4. Train your staff:** Provide your staff with training on how to handle transcripts, including how to read and interpret different types of transcripts and how to handle unusual or challenging cases. This can help ensure that transcripts are processed accurately and consistently.
- 5. Continuously evaluate and improve:** Regularly review your transcript processing procedures to identify areas for improvement and implement changes as needed. This can help ensure that your processes remain efficient and effective, even as your volume of transcripts grows.

Intelligent automation solutions, like Shamrock's Freedom, extract the data from the transcript page and make it available for quick and easy verification (if and where needed) and ingestion into external SIS and ECM systems. This synchronizes data across your student and transcript processing systems, further increasing efficiency across your entire admissions process. And, should a transcript require further attention, an automatic notification and request for information to the student is just a click away.



TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS FOR TRANSCRIPT PROCESSING

Revolutionizing Transcript Processing with Automation

With all these challenges in mind, it's nice to know that technology has revolutionized the way that higher education institutions process transcripts - especially for high school transcripts. With the help of automation software, like Shamrock's Freedom platform, transcript processing workflows can be streamlined and optimized for greater efficiency, accuracy, and consistency.

This software can automatically extract data from transcripts and convert it into a standardized format that can be easily evaluated and compared against the institution's admission criteria. It also allows for customization and integration with existing systems, reducing the need for manual data entry and reducing the risk of errors. Automation software can provide real-time data and analytics, allowing admissions officers to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and make informed decisions.

It's clear: by leveraging the power of technology, institutions can save time and resources, increase transparency and accuracy, and ultimately provide a better experience for both admissions officers and prospective students.

Let's take a look at a few key technologies that expedite transcript processing:

Content and Document Management

A document management system (DMS) or Enterprise Content Management (ECM) system can further streamline transcript and admissions processing by providing a centralized location to store and manage electronic transcripts and other admissions documents as part of a student record. These systems help manage documents from multiple sources, such as transcripts or application documents from varying high schools, colleges, and universities, and can alert staff to missing or incomplete transcripts. Staff can quickly search for and retrieve documents, reducing the time and effort required to locate and process individual student records.



Data Extraction

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology plays a crucial role in assisting admissions officers with transcript processing. OCR technology enables the automated extraction and conversion of text from scanned or digital transcripts into editable and searchable formats. This eliminates the need for manual data entry, significantly reducing the time and effort required to process transcripts. With OCR, admissions officers can quickly extract important information from transcripts, such as course names, grades, and credits earned, and seamlessly integrate it into their evaluation systems.



Robots to the Rescue

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) can be leveraged in the transcript processing workflow to automate repetitive and time-consuming tasks. RPA involves using software robots to mimic the actions of a human user, such as opening applications, navigating interfaces, and entering data. In the context of transcript processing, RPA can be used to enter extracted data into student information systems, and perform other routine tasks.

Fitting the Puzzle Pieces Together

Leveraging a combination of content/document management, Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) can significantly assist admissions staff with processing incoming transcripts and student applications more efficiently.

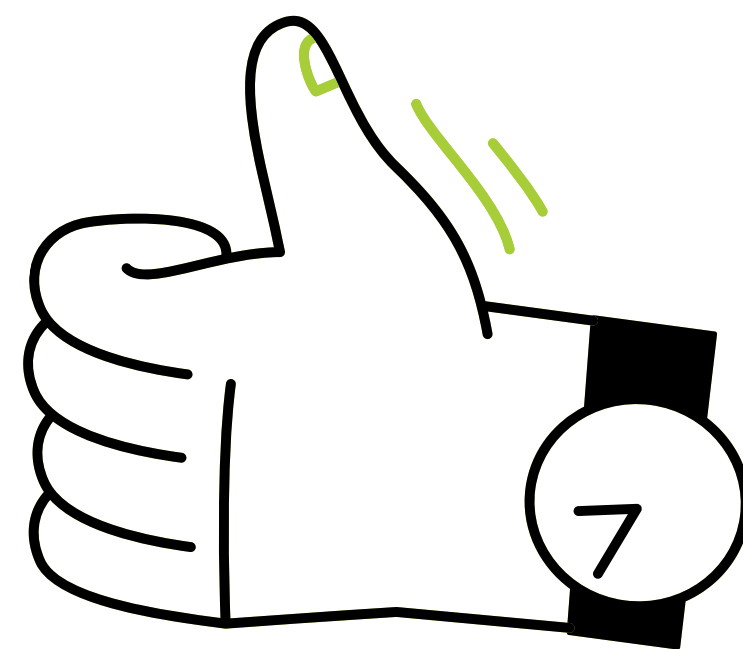
Content/document management systems provide a centralized repository for storing and organizing digital documents, making it easier to access and manage transcripts and application materials. OCR technology enables the automatic extraction of text from scanned or digital documents, such as transcripts, allowing for quick and accurate data capture. This eliminates the need for manual data entry and minimizes the chances of errors. Additionally, RPA can be utilized to automate repetitive and rule-based tasks, such as data entry into student information systems or application verification.

By combining these technologies, admissions staff can streamline their workflow, reduce processing time, improve data accuracy, and free up valuable time to focus on higher-value activities, such as applicant evaluation and providing personalized support to prospective students. The result is an enhanced admissions process that is more efficient, consistent, and responsive to the needs of both staff and applicants.



Choosing the Right Technology Solution & Partner

When selecting and implementing a technology solution, higher education institutions should consider several important factors: solution capabilities and customization potential, cloud vs on-premise hosting, required staffing and training, budget and cost-effectiveness of the solution, security and integrations, and partner/support services provided by the vendor.



Ultimately, choosing the right technology solution can help institutions streamline their transcript processing workflow, reduce manual errors, and increase efficiency, leading to a better student experience and institutional growth.

Consider the below tips when selecting and implementing the right transcript processing solution and partner:

- 1. Identify your needs:** Evaluate your current transcript processing workflow and identify pain points and areas for improvement.
- 2. Research solutions:** Research different transcript processing software solutions and assess their features and capabilities to determine which solution best aligns with your needs.
- 3. Consider cloud-based solutions:** Consider cloud-based transcript processing solutions that can be accessed from anywhere and do not require additional infrastructure or IT support.
- 4. Evaluate integration capabilities:** Ensure that the chosen solution can integrate with your existing systems, such as your student information system, to streamline data transfer and reduce errors.
- 5. Assess scalability:** Consider whether the chosen solution can accommodate growth and increased volume of transcripts as your institution expands.
- 6. Factor in staffing needs:** Determine how the chosen solution will impact staffing needs and whether additional training or resources will be necessary.
- 7. Evaluate cost:** Compare the cost of the chosen solution to the potential cost savings and benefits it can provide, such as increased efficiency and accuracy in transcript processing.



8. Plan for implementation: Develop a clear plan for implementing the chosen solution, including timelines, roles and responsibilities, and communication strategies.

9. Test and evaluate: Test the solution thoroughly before implementing it and continue to evaluate its effectiveness to ensure that it is meeting your institution's needs.

When it comes to implementing process automation solutions, it's also important to consider developing a relationship with a trusted partner who can provide guidance and support throughout the entire process. A good partner can help advise on best practices, industry norms, and common challenges and opportunities for your consideration. They can also serve as an advocate for you, ensuring that your needs and goals are met.

“We needed a partner that was willing to invest in our success. We partnered with Shamrock after speaking with their very satisfied customers, and Shamrock did just that!”

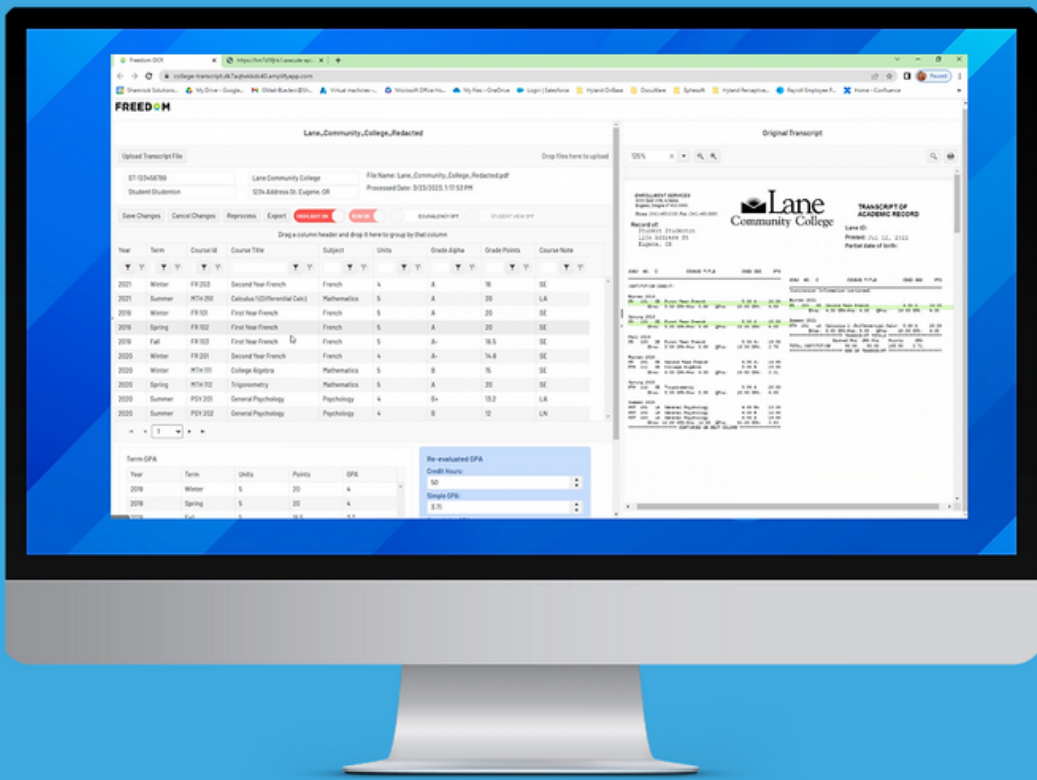
Tracy, Jefferson College

Shamrock Solutions has been a trusted partner for our customers in the process automation and intelligent automation space since 2009.

Our team of experts is dedicated to providing compassionate guidance and support to help our customers achieve their automation goals!



FREEDOM



Fast turnaround times: Freedom processes transcripts in under 24 hours and allows institutions to provide notice to students within 3 days, enhancing the student experience and potentially impacting their decision to attend the institution.



Cost-effective: Freedom alleviates the high costs associated with traditional manual data entry, enabling institutions to access important data faster and repurpose staff to higher value work.



Versatility: Freedom can process high school, transfer credit, international, and military transcripts, ensuring comprehensive automation for all incoming transcripts.

Shamrock Solutions' innovative OCR transcript processing solution, Freedom, is intentionally designed to address the challenges Admissions teams encounter with transcript processing - particularly high school transcripts.

Freedom assists higher education institutions by streamlining the management of high school, transfer credit, international, and military transcripts, significantly reducing processing time and manual data entry costs. Its seamless integration with course equivalency databases and existing systems simplifies the admissions process, enabling admissions and registrar officers to make faster, more informed decisions.

- Process incoming high school, transfer credit, international, and military transcripts **automatically**.
- Standardize and extract meaning from **high-school** coursework.
- Speed up admissions decision-making, providing notice to students within **3 days**.
- Reduce costs associated with manual data entry and **repurpose staff** to higher-value work.
- Bypass the need for on-site infrastructure with Freedom's **cloud-based** architecture.
- Provide a touchless option for staff with Shamrock's **Transcript-as-a-Service (TAAS)** model.



Visit www.LuckyYouFoundUs.com/transcripts learn more about Freedom and how it can transform your admissions process! Let Shamrock Solutions help you boost productivity, reduce stress, and achieve better outcomes for your students, faculty, and staff. Experience the transformative power of Freedom today!



TAKING YOUR TRANSCRIPTS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Mastering high school transcript processing is essential for higher education institutions today as the admissions process becomes more competitive and the challenge of test-optional policies for incoming high school applicants continues to evolve.

Understanding the different types of high school transcripts, as well as the grading systems used and how they fit into the overall admissions process is critical for evaluating candidates fairly and consistently. Efficient and accurate processing of transcripts can be achieved through the use of technology solutions such as Freedom, which streamlines the overall admissions workflow and minimizes the risk of errors. Proper selection and implementation of the right solution can improve efficiency, reduce costs, and ultimately lead to a more diverse and qualified student body for your institution.

Ready to master high school transcripts and streamline your admissions process? Schedule a meeting with Shamrock today and discuss your transcript challenges with our team of experts! Let us show you how intelligent automation can save you time, improve accuracy, and enhance your admissions process.

Who We Are

Shamrock is a Kansas City-based company founded in 2009 with a mission to solve critical business problems and empower organizations to do great work. We are passionate process solvers, dedicated to helping our customers overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Our core values of being customer obsessed, displaying tenacious perseverance, fostering independent collaboration, and embodying grit drive everything we do.


At Shamrock, we strive to be the compassionate guide, supporting our customers every step of the way on their journey towards success.

Contact us now at
www.LuckyYouFoundUs.com/transcripts!



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Grades are like a rollercoaster
ride; with ups, downs, and
plenty of screaming.

